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Their Will Be Done ✠

BY MARTIN A. LEE

One day in July 1944, as the Second World War raged throughout Europe, General William "Wild Bill" Donovan was ushered into an ornate chamber in Vatican City for an audience with Pope Pius XII. Donovan bowed his head reverently as the pontiff intoned a ceremonial prayer in Latin and decorated him with the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Sylvester, the oldest and most prestigious of papal knighthoods. This award has been given to only 100 other men in history, who "by feat of arms, or writings, or outstanding deeds, have spread the Faith, and have safeguarded and championed the Church."

Although a papal citation of this sort rarely, if ever, states why a person is inducted into the "Golden Militia," there can be no doubt that Donovan earned his knighthood by virtue of the services he rendered to the Catholic hierarchy in World War II, during which he served as chief of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the wartime predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In 1941, the year before the OSS was officially constituted, Donovan forged a close alliance with Father Felix Morlion, founder of a European Catholic intelligence service known as Pro Deo. When the Germans overran western Europe, Donovan helped Morlion move his base of operations from Lisbon to New York. From then on, Pro Deo was financed by Donovan, who believed that such an expenditure would result in valuable insight into the secret affairs of the Vatican, then a neutral enclave in the midst of fascist Rome. When the Allies liberated Rome in 1944, Morlion re-established his spy network in the Vatican; from

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